



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

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Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

*DHMH Office of Communications*

*Karen Black  
410-767-6491*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**DHMH Activating State Heat Emergency Web Site**

BALTIMORE, MD (May 24, 2012) – With Memorial Day weekend marking the traditional start of the summer season, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) is activating its State Heat Emergency web site today at: <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/extremeheat>.

The site includes links to the State Heat Plan, Facts about Heat Related Illness, and weekly Heat Reports that provide guidance and information about deaths and illness caused by extreme heat in the region.

“Many residents are at risk during periods of extreme heat,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, DHMH Secretary. “We hope to reduce illness and death by preparing everyone for those hot summer days.”

According to the Plan, DHMH will issue a heat advisory notice when heat index values are expected to meet or exceed 105 degrees. These conditions may pose danger for some residents, especially those with other significant health concerns. Heat stroke and heat exhaustion are common illnesses that you want to avoid:

**Heat stroke** is a serious illness characterized by a body temperature greater than 105 degrees. Symptoms may include dry red skin, convulsions, disorientation, delirium and coma. Onset of heatstroke can be rapid: a person can go from feeling apparently well to a seriously ill condition within minutes. Treatment of heatstroke involves the rapid lowering of body temperature, using a cool bath or wet towels. A heatstroke victim should be kept in a cool area; emergency medical care should be obtained by dialing 911.

**Heat exhaustion** is a milder form of heatstroke that may develop due to a combination of several days with high temperatures and dehydration in an individual. Signs of heat exhaustion include extreme weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, or headache. Victims may also vomit or faint. Heat exhaustion is treated with plenty of liquids and rest in a cool, shaded area. Those on a low-sodium diet or with other health problems should contact a doctor.

“When the weather is extremely hot, seniors, young children and persons with heart disease and other health conditions must be protected,” said Frances Phillips, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. “The consequences of heat exposure can be very serious.”

#### Hot weather tips:

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit juices to prevent dehydration -- be aware that alcohol can impair the body's sweat mechanism, as can fairly common medications such as antihistamines and diuretics;
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothes;
- Avoid direct sunlight by staying in the shade or by wearing sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses;
- When possible, stay in air-conditioned areas. If your home is not air-conditioned, consider a visit to a shopping mall or public library. Contact your local health department to see if there are cooling shelters open in your area;
- NEVER leave pets or young children in a car, even with the windows cracked;
- Check on elderly relatives or neighbors at least daily; and
- Take it easy when outdoors. Athletes and those who work outdoors should take short breaks when feeling fatigued. Schedule physical activity during the morning or evening when it is cooler.

In 2011, there were 34 confirmed heat related deaths between the months of May and August. In 2010, a total of 32 deaths, in 2009, six heat related deaths; in 2008, 17; and in 2007, 21 deaths were confirmed as heat related.

Marylanders in need of a cooling center or assistance should contact their Local Health Department for information by phone or the internet or by going to the DHMH Heat Emergency website <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/extremeheat>

#### Additional Resources:

For more information visit (Including Spanish language websites):

- Maryland Emergency Management Agency:  
[http://www.mema.state.md.us/MEMA/content\\_page.jsp?TOPICID=othernds](http://www.mema.state.md.us/MEMA/content_page.jsp?TOPICID=othernds)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>
  - CDC Spanish Translation: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/es/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>
- Additional Spanish Language Resources:  
[http://www.epa.gov/aging/resources/factsheets/itdhpfehe/itdhpfehe\\_spanish\\_100-F-08-076.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/aging/resources/factsheets/itdhpfehe/itdhpfehe_spanish_100-F-08-076.pdf)  
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